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ABSTRACT

The Basic Education and Policy Support Activity (BEPS), a new five-year initiative sponsored by United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Center for Human Capacity Development, is designed to improve the quality, effectiveness, and access to formal and nonformal basic education. BEPS operates through both core funds and buy-ins to provide both short- and long-term assistance to missions and regional bureaus. BEPS focuses on several program areas: basic education; educational policy analysis and reform; restorative and additive educational work in countries in crisis; and alleviation of abusive child labor. USAID/Dominican Republic is seeking to address the dual need for non-governmental resources and increased civil society involvement in improving basic education. It wishes to launch a three year project to replicate a model of school sponsorship, pioneered by the Falconbridge mining company, in other provinces where private sector interest supports educational improvement. This report offers an outline of the organizational structure that a public/private partnership could take to achieve a sponsorship program, offering a picture of who the partners are, what their roles and responsibilities would be, and what the likely costs to USAID would be. The report is divided into five parts: (1) "Introduction" (Questions Guiding the Investigation; Field Work; Structure of This Report); (2) "Central Themes of Interviews" (Lack of Trust in the Overall Environment; Institutional and Organizational Concerns about a School Sponsorship Program; Widely Differing Views on the Likelihood of Business Support for a Program); (3) "Considerations for the School Sponsorship Program" (Key Assumptions; Program Structure; Role of the Board; Executive Director; Responsibilities for Members; Staff); (4) "Recommendations"; and (5) "Costs." A list of interviewees is appended. (BT)

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Expanding Public/Private Partnerships for Improving Basic Education through School Sponsorship in the Dominican Republic

Final Report

The Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity

Contract No. HNE-I-00-00-00038-00
Task Order No. 812

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PREFACE

The Basic Education and Policy Support Activity (BEPS), a new five-year initiative sponsored by USAID's Center for Human Capacity Development, is designed to improve the quality, effectiveness, and access to formal and nonformal basic education. As an IQC contract type, BEPS operates through both core funds and Mission buy-ins to provide both short- and long-term assistance to Missions and Regional Bureaus.

BEPS focuses on several important program areas: basic education; educational policy analysis and reform; restorative and additive educational work in countries in crisis (presence and non-presence); and the alleviation of abusive child labor. Services to be provided include policy appraisals and assessments, training and institutional strengthening, and the design and implementation of pilot projects, feasibility studies, applied research studies, seminars/workshops, and evaluations. Under BEPS, USAID also will compile and disseminate results, lessons learned, and other generalizable information through electronic networks, training workshops, national conferences, quarterly and annual reports, publications, and other vehicles.

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I. INTRODUCTION

USAID/Dominican Republic is seeking to address the dual need for non-governmental resources and increased civil society involvement in improving basic education. To achieve this result, one activity will be a school sponsorship program based on other successful projects in the Dominican Republic. USAID/Dominican Republic wishes to launch a three-year project to replicate a model of school sponsorship pioneered by the Falconbridge mining company in other provinces where private sector interest supports educational improvement. This report offers an outline of the organizational structure a public/private partnership could take to achieve a sponsorship program, offering a picture of who the partners are, what their roles and responsibilities would be and what the likely costs to USAID would be.

Questions Guiding the Investigation

An initial assessment of the Falconbridge model was extremely positive and offers a vision of how a school sponsorship program can work. The current work builds on that and began by asking several questions, such as is the Falconbridge model replicable elsewhere in the Dominican Republic? If it were, what modifications to the model would have to be made? What should the structure of this modified program be? What is the role for USAID?

Field Work

During a three-week assessment conducted in September and October 2001, the team met with representatives of the domestic and international private sector. This included interviews with employees and owners of specific companies, many of which are engaged in programs with schools already, and with members of trade groups and other business associations. The purpose of these visits was to ascertain the level of potential private support for a school sponsorship and the criteria that any program would need to meet to ensure private sector participation. These conversations, along with those held with the Executive Director of the Falconbridge Foundation, USAID officials, the Ministry of Education, and the not for profit sector involved in education form the basis for the recommendations made in this document.

Structure of this Report

This document first presents the central themes that arose during the interviews. These are crucial for assessing the level of support that a sponsorship program is likely to attract as well as the impediments that it may run into. The second section outlines the assumptions about partnerships that guide the investigation, and implications of the findings outlined in Part I for the structure and function of a school sponsorship program. The third section offers specific recommendations about what components the program should offer. The final section discusses the costs that USAID is likely to incur.

II. REPLICABILITY OF THE FALCONBRIDGE SCHOOL SPONSORSHIP MODEL: ISSUES CONSIDERED

Lack of Trust in the Overall Environment

First, there is a great deal of distrust towards the government that manifests itself in a variety of ways. Business that are truly interested in working with schools and who do so currently worry that a sponsorship program run by the government would be a mere photo opportunity for other business to get their name somewhere without doing any of the real work. There is some basis for this belief in the former government's sponsorship program, which is universally seen as having been ruined and discredited by its politicization. Second, a lack of trust between some sponsored schools and the sponsoring companies is also evident (based partly on petty, school-based corruption), which leads to less overall investment for the schools. Third, the private sector expresses strong distrust for some of the NGO sector. They see some, although certainly not all, NGOs as corrupt and/or having a populist political agenda. Highly visible and established NGOs such as EDUCA are not included in this category, although EDUCA suffers from a lack of credibility that is related to its performance, not its integrity. This point is discussed in greater detail in the section below. Fourth, NGOs feel a lack of trust coming from both corporate and government sectors, which in turn reduces their trust towards those sectors and limits their effectiveness.

Institutional and organizational concerns about the structure of a school sponsorship program.

Universal rejection of the idea that the Department of Education should run a school sponsorship program: In keeping with the point made above about the lack of trust towards the public sector, the notion that Secretaría de Educación would have anything to do with managing the finances would doom the program from the outset. This reaction is based not only on a general view of the inefficiency, politicization and corruption of the public sector, but also on the experience of a previous school adoption program undertaken by the last administration that failed, due to its intense association with the former president.

Lack of confidence on EDUCA's capacity to be the organization to manage the school sponsorship program: Because EDUCA is a foundation created by the business community to deal with educational issues, it was seen from the beginning of this project as a potential institutional home for the school sponsorship program. However, many from the business sector are highly disappointed in EDUCA and see it as an extremely ineffective organization – 'all talk and not much action'. Some respondents went so far as to suggest that if EDUCA were the intermediate entity, many businesses would decline to participate for fear that their money would not be used wisely. Others with a closer connection to EDUCA defend it as the only organization with ties to the business sector that has a primary focus on education and for that reason should be considered as a potential candidate to run a school sponsorship program.

Long-term sustainability requires an endowment: The experience of many of the business sector respondents was that institutions that had in the past prospered over the long run were those that had been able to build endowments. From their perspective, it would be wise for the foundation that runs the sponsorship program to begin the work of creating and building an endowment at the outset, well before USAID financial support ends.

Importance of a prominent USAID Role: Many people suggested that USAID leadership of the school sponsorship program is essential for getting businesses to participate because only with USAIDs visible support will they believe that the program is really apolitical, serious and run in a financially sound and transparent manner. Without USAID's visible presence, issues about the lack of trust are likely to be insurmountable.

Need to clarify the legal framework for charitable giving: The legal framework for corporate donations is extremely murky. Most corporations are confused about what they can deduct – there are issues about 5%, an additional 1.5% and a separate 5% for strictly educational contributions. Until this is resolved, many companies are reluctant to contribute. It is essential that the legal framework for corporate charitable giving be clarified and that the correct information be disseminated among the business community. It is essential that the *Dirección General de Impuestos Internos* be the organism that does the dissemination since they are the only ones with the credibility to be convincing to the business sector.

Widely differing views on the likelihood of business support for a school sponsorship program

National business community: Those who believe that domestic funds can be tapped feel that there is already significant participation with schools, although they see it as more likely to be one-time philanthropic donations rather than the kind of on-going support that a sponsorship program would entail. In addition, the optimists feel that over the past decade, businesses have become much more conscious of the need to have a better trained labor force and are ready to support education because they realize it is their only long run option. Rather than seeing this as the state's responsibility, one leader echoing a common sentiment among this group argued that education "is too important to be handled by the politicians".

Those with a negative view focus on what they see as a long-standing tendency for the national business sector to be disengaged and not socially conscious. They also suggested that business leaders have not made the connection between their own long-run interests and profitability on one hand, and a better trained work force on the other. The feeling among this group is that businesses want the cheapest labor possible, even if it is highly unskilled. In addition, they fear that the slowdown in the US economy after September 11th will have serious repercussions on the Dominican economy and make participation less likely.

International Business Community: Because some of the larger foreign corporations have budgets set aside for social investments, are extremely concerned about the quality of the local labor force, and have a tradition of 'good corporate citizenship', there appears to be fairly strong support among this community for a sponsorship program. In particular, some firms seem to want to engage in social investment but have no mechanisms for channeling it. They would welcome an organization that could do that. The other positive view of these firms is that they

may be larger than Dominican firms and are in a position to make a greater financial contribution.

The negative view of foreign participation centered on the firms' uncertainty of their timeframe for investment in the Dominican Republic. One respondent felt that those firms, such as many of those in the free trade zones, have short-term commitments to be in the Dominican Republic are unlikely to invest in education.

No clear consensus on role of private sector in education. Some of those interviewed see the role of business as helping to provide nearby schools with materials and money to fix their crumbling or non-existent infrastructure. There is a clear-cut rationale for doing so; it is a highly visible signal to local communities that the enterprise is investing in the school, it may improve its image and community relations, and can make the firm's employees more content. For some, this should be the extent of business involvement since they believe that school processes such as teaching, curriculum or administration are the responsibility of the Ministry. Not only do they believe it is inappropriate for business to get involved in programs such as teacher training, but they would also reject the idea of paying for it.

Other business leaders saw a much broader role for the private sector. The common element among the firms they represented was that they already had functioning school sponsorship programs. In some cases, they had gotten guidance from the Falconbridge Foundation about how to set up and run such programs. Some of the firms already working in schools have gotten requests for help with programs for teachers. In some ways this appeared as a natural extension of the help they offer that makes teachers' jobs easier and more productive such as buying books and classroom supplies. However, the experience with teacher training shows that for firms working with a small number of schools, the unit cost tends to be prohibitively high; it is difficult for firms to arrange since they are not educational specialists; and the focus is often not on academic training strictly speaking (although it may focus on other valuable topics). None of the firms engages in any evaluation of the training they sponsor. One firm, that does not currently sponsor any training but is working with schools, did argue much more forcefully than any of the others interviewed about the necessity for benchmarking and impact evaluations of anything they might invest in with the schools. However, this firm has a long-standing corporate culture that prizes measurement. Accordingly other firms without such a focus might not see the need for this type of activity without some degree of convincing.

Another roadblock to including teacher training in sponsorship program that will need to be addressed is the widespread concern about teachers voiced by business leaders. Many of the respondents linked the problems of education to the teachers, whom they view as highly politicized, concerned mainly about salary issues and often derelict in their responsibilities. Some fear was expressed that this problem was unlikely to be touched by a school sponsorship program. Overcoming the distrust of teachers and the fear of potential politicization of the program is a key challenge for the developers of the program.

Short-term and long term visions of education. School sponsorship is seen as providing a short-run return in terms of good public relations, creating a more content workforce or improving community relations. Although many individual business leaders do specifically link the quality

of education to future competitiveness, arguing that the Dominican education system has to improve or the country will fall behind its competitors in the region, this vision does not necessarily translate to a plan for specific activity in education at the firm level. Although some companies see that in the long run their corporate interests are best served by a better-trained workforce, their focus is on the short-run benefits. Most do not see their participation with the education sector as a means of addressing the long-term educational quality issue. In fact, this is quite rational since individual programs *are* unlikely to have much effect in the aggregate. In addition, economists argue that firms are typically willing to make some investments in training that is firm specific, but much more reluctant to provide general training. General training tends to be quite portable, and there is the danger that workers will leave and get hired by competitors who can reap the rewards of basic training without ever investing in it. Asking firms to sponsor basic education as an investment in their own futures is unlikely to be a convincing argument since it is both a long-term proposition and a very portable type of training for individuals. A number of associations and business people also believed that many in the sector are not convinced of the need to improve education in any case since they prefer to compete on the basis of low-wage, low-skill labor.

The role of the schools and community in school sponsorship programs. One of the important aspects of the Falconbridge program is the process of school selection. Schools need to petition to join the program; there must be a functioning parents group and Falconbridge works intensively with the staff to ensure that they are accountable and a true partner for the Foundation. Schools sign a contract with Falconbridge to underscore the partnership and mutual responsibility aspect of the program. The school and community are also expected to make a substantial contribution to the improvement process, usually through in-kind contributions such as 'sweat equity' rather than cash. In all the other firms that currently sponsor schools, even those who had consulted with Falconbridge, this expectation about the role of the school and community, and this kind of work with them, was largely absent.

Most of the other school sponsorship programs discussed during the interviews could best be characterized as ongoing philanthropic activity, rather than true partnerships. There are several lessons here for a school sponsorship program. First, firms that sponsor schools typically do not choose schools that are the most 'appropriate' in terms of their organizational structure and willingness to be sponsored but rather are located close to the firm or in the communities where employees live. This sometimes occasions problems due to the lack of 'buy-in' from the schools – expensive donated materials disappear, costly renovations fall into disrepair in a matter of weeks.

Second, because firms often want quick results, they tend not to engage in some of the activities that build buy-in from the community such as community work on the construction and repairs. Such work, even where it does occur, can be viewed by the firm as expendable rather than as a process that leads to a feeling of community ownership of the project. For example, in one case the community was very slow to complete its work on the school building due to the employment commitments of the parents. The firm, knowing that the work would not meet the start of school deadline, brought in a private construction firm to complete the job on time.

Third, a bad experience will 'poison the well'. One company had a disagreeable incident with the theft of donated equipment by school personnel. Because firms are not in the business of strict policing, nor do they wish to risk community disapproval by dropping their sponsorship, they tend to write off these kinds of losses. However, the result is to lower their investment and involvement with the school. While firms appear not to see the need for prior work with schools and communities to ensure that they are real partners, the positive evidence from Falconbridge and the negative from other firms suggest that it is essential for a sponsorship program.

III. CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE SCHOOL SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

This section discusses the organizational and programmatic shape that an USAID-led initiative for a school sponsorship program in the Dominican Republic could take and the roles and responsibilities for the participating public and private sector partners. It identifies how the best practices exemplified in the Falconbridge model can be configured in a program that would involve multiple sponsors rather than a single corporate donor and offers suggestions about how to avoid some of the potential problems detected by the interviews. The discussion also focuses on cost considerations.

Key Assumptions

Several assumptions are made in this report. The first set of assumptions concerns the nature of partnerships. In order to work, we assume that all partners must gain from the arrangement. In this case, the partners are the private sector, the Ministry of Education and schools/communities. The school sponsorship program must be conscious of ensuring that each of the participants feels that it gains from the arrangement. We also assume that partners have fundamental concerns, outlooks and values that need to be accommodated in the design of a program and that to ignore or violate these threatens the success of the program. For example, program designers need to recognize that private enterprises are profit-making entities whose main obligations are to shareholders. It would be unwise to base a sponsorship program on the notion, expressed by a number of those interviewed outside the private sector, that businesses have a central obligation to provide communities with social services. Similarly, the view expressed by some in the business community that the Ministry and the state in general should remove themselves from education and leave it to the private sector (through privatization) violates a central tenet that state partners hold about their role in ensuring equity and forming citizens.

A second assumption is that the primary purpose of the school sponsorship program proposed here is to improve the quality of the schools involved and to funnel the information gained about school improvement back into the system to positively influence the system as a whole. In this respect, the school sponsorship program is subtly different than the others examined here, including Falconbridge, in that their primary goal tended to be community development and relations, even though quality improvement may have been a result. This implies a more focused approach on monitoring and evaluation of results as well as a focus on the system as a whole, not just the participating schools.

Finally an assumption made here is while USAID's visible presence is a necessity for the program as it begins, the agency's financial and logistical support is limited in time to a few years. This means that an exit strategy and a plan for sustainability, however defined, of the program needs to be built into the initial design.

Program Structure

Because none of the foundations or non-governmental organizations interviewed enjoyed the full support and confidence of the business community, the creation of a new, small foundation is warranted. We propose the simplest organizational structure possible that is able to offer a clearly articulated vision of the value the foundation's work is able to add to Dominican education.

The proposed organization is modeled on the Falconbridge Foundation with modifications to reflect the fact that multiple companies will participate, the need to represent numerous stakeholders and the primary focus on school quality improvement. Like Falconbridge, this new foundation prizes financial accountability, a prerequisite for attracting the financial support of domestic and international business community, and works with participating schools and communities to ensure that they become true partners in the process of improvement. Because the goal is upgrading school quality not just among the participating institutions but at the level of the system, the foundation will also focus on building support for this endeavor among the private sector and working closely with the public sector to incorporate the successes and lessons learned into the education system as a whole.

To achieve these goals, we propose a working board composed of key stakeholders (USAID, CONEP, Ministry of Education, EDUCA – perhaps though Alianza-ONG, Falconbridge, AMCHAM), a fundraising and institutionalization arm, an executive director, who is a catalyzer of resources, and a small permanent staff, which creates a mechanism for contracting out specific services to the schools through the business sponsors or partners.

The Role of the Board

The board, in conjunction with the executive director, is the public face of the organization. It has several key administrative and policy functions. The board sets overall goals in conjunction with the executive director, for whom it is responsible in terms of hiring, firing and evaluating. A central task is financial oversight and ensuring accountability. The board is the fiscal agent for the project and as noted above, only an organization that is financially irreproachable will be able to attract the funds to make the school sponsorship program successful. The board will receive, audit and administer all public and private funds, set strict controls on the use of funds, maintain a low overhead rate, and have transparent accounting procedures.

The board also has responsibility for fundraising from the start as well as developing a plan to institutionalize the foundation (that is, make it self-sustaining). In addition to securing a financial base, the board would use its high profile to get the message of the importance of school quality and private sector participation out. Publicity and fundraising go hand in hand as the board attempts to use its authority and influence to get the private sector involved in the issue

both financially and politically. Board members from the private sector should understand that promoting the success of the program is part of the agreement they make by joining the board.

The board can also be a useful structure for recruiting schools into the program. One recommendation (discussed more fully below) is that the size and pace of the development of the sponsorship program should be small, slow and steady. The board through its institutional members would be responsible for bringing in schools; for example, the American Chamber of Commerce or CONEP could each have one or two of their member organizations sponsor schools. The foundation will work intensively with both the schools and the firms to ensure a true partnership; this will be a learning activity for the firms and by bringing the schools partners in via the board structure, the possibilities for greater learning in the business community about the conditions for successful sponsorship.

To carry out these tasks, the committee structure of the board might include committees on fundraising and publicity; monitoring and evaluation; school selection and an audit committee.

The Executive Director

One of the lessons from the Falconbridge experience is how crucial the person running the program is to its overall success. In the Dominican context, that means being able to speak the languages of business and school administration. For that reason, the position of Executive Director for the school sponsorship program is perhaps the most important appointment that will be made.

The Executive Director is the critical piece of the model: This is a person who has above average skill in managing complex, conflicting expectations and in negotiating clarity. He or she must be able to express clearly and concisely what the foundation is about and what value it adds to the schools.

Speaking the language of the stakeholders is a key quality the person will bring to the position. Not only must he or she be accepted by the business community, but also must be able to negotiate the official bureaucracy and talk to the schools and communities. During the interviews, we saw a number of examples of individuals who could successfully navigate extremely varied constituencies. One such representative of a business association with whom we met had the skill to understand and articulate clearly what her group needed from a business-schools partnership, had a long-term vision of the endeavor in terms of what it meant both for the industry and the community, and had the human touch to sleep in the community's housing when visiting the area. A school sponsorship program implies the coming together of numerous cultures – corporate, state bureaucratic, schools, NGOs, etc. and understanding the nuances of each and how to move comfortably in each.

Dynamism in the ability to raise funds is another key qualification. The Executive Director has to recognize the importance of sustainability of the project and be able to manage time to meet this objective. Because defining sustainability and creating a plan for attaining it will be an early task of the foundation, the Executive Director's task is not simply to raise funds alone, but also

to be able to form an effective team for sustainability and work in conjunction with a professional fundraiser and key board members of the foundation.

As the experience of Falconbridge has shown, working to ensure the buy-in of schools and communities is a time-consuming but necessary task. The Executive Director, together with the board, needs to help develop the criteria for school participation, to work with the schools on creating their sense of ownership and participation and then help schools in the program identify their needs. Conducting needs assessments as schools come into the program is likely to be one of the most important activities of the Executive Director in the early years of the program making the ability to do so one of the criteria for candidate selection.

Another important qualification of the Executive Director is strong management skills including strategic planning, clarity and ease in presentations and understanding how to manage networks and relationships. Because many of the involved stakeholders on the board will be volunteers, traditional management incentives will not be the primary motivators of the stakeholders. Rather, understanding the principles of managing volunteers such as Peter Drucker's work with the Center for Volunteer Leadership will be useful.

The proposed profile of the Executive Director suggests that such an individual is more likely to have a background in business than in education. Because the central goal is to improve quality in education, the Executive Director must be familiar with how educational improvement occurs and how measures of quality used in business can be translated for schools. Since it might be difficult to find someone with that background, this is an area where USAID could invest in training the otherwise successful candidate.

	Responsibilities for Members of the Foundation	
Board	**Executive Director**	**Staff**
Agenda setting Oversight Policy making Fundraising and publicity School recruitment Private sector donor recruitment	Sets the direction of the program with the Board. Hires or contracts all staff, ministry personnel. Works with the board to develop criteria for school selection Works with the Ministry to develop resources in target schools. Conducts needs assessments with potential business partners Responsible for ensuring program quality, assesses school progress, periodic reports to board of the foundation, ministry, and key actors	Professional fundraiser Assist Executive Director with needs assessments Work intensively with schools on improvement process Act as a liaison with Ministry to help incorporate lessons into education system Help coordinate teacher training efforts

The Staff

The proposal for the Foundation envisions an extremely small staff that could grow over time as the number of schools involved increases. However, there are two types of professional staff in addition to the Executive Director that should be considered. The first is contracting a professional fundraiser for the first two years. This would allow the Executive Director to focus on work with schools and consciousness raising in the business community without having to be unduly concerned with raising funds initially (though the Executive Director will still need to engage in some fundraising). In addition, the goal of a fundraiser should be to accumulate funds towards an endowment in order to ensure sustainability of the Foundation.

A second type of staffing that has worked well in the Falconbridge model has been personnel from the Ministry of Education. Bringing in personnel from the Ministry of Education for the sponsorship program would have numerous benefits that would help further multiple goals of the Foundation. First, staff members would have expertise in the field of education and would know the requirements of the Ministry with respect to curriculum and programs. Second, they could be effective in dealing with the other levels of the education bureaucracy such as the supervisors. Third, they should be able to take the best practices from the sponsorship program and take them back to the Ministry for re-incorporation into school planning. Part of the gains that the Ministry of Education needs to realize from this partnership is using the lessons about improvement in the school system as a whole. In order for this to happen, the staff members from the Ministry need to have the support of the Ministry to be able to reincorporate the lessons learned officially without bureaucratic impediments. Part of the work of the Foundation should therefore also be a consciousness raising effort within the Ministry. Here, the board member from the Ministry, whether the Minister or the newly created position within the Ministry dedicated to school sponsorships, could play a pivotal role. A fourth benefit of hiring staff from the Ministry is that they are in a sense on loan from the Ministry, which pays their base salary and benefits. The Foundation would pay only a supplemental incentive to salary, thereby keeping its costs down.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Start extremely slowly and with small goals in mind. The initial focus must be on a successful startup, doing everything possible to ensure early success. That may mean a long planning period that begins with a convocatory period, selection of a board, and selection of an executive director. During this period, the mission of the foundation needs to be drawn up, members and potential participants can be coached, and a process of simple listening done in order to incorporate the needs and expectations of the board and foundation into the design. The expectations for the first year of sponsorship should be small, focused on fewer than ten schools -- between five and seven would be optimal. Such a size is manageable with a small staff, allows intensive efforts that in effect refuse to allow schools to fail, and is sufficiently large to allow for economies of scale in some construction contracting and teacher training efforts. Schools should only be brought in once it is clear that they are ready to work with the foundation and that they have 'bought into' the project. Not rushing their participation is crucial. Working with a very limited number of schools will allow the foundation to avoid failure and learn lessons about what works that can be used in the future.

Engage in trust building exercises among the partners. Another important type of activity during this initial period is trust-building exercises among the partners. The key actors in the process are suspicious of each other. Even with a strong board and Executive Director, the program will be in jeopardy unless greater understanding is achieved at the beginning and there is the potential for USAID's image of an impartial broker to suffer. Facilitated workshops where the partners figure out what issues they agree upon and where they have differences can help them overcome the latter. Ideally, this would entail a process whose outcome is written agreements, with timelines, to solve some of the more difficult issues. At a minimum, the different groups will have a clear understanding of what they can expect from the other.

Begin with the consciousness raising process among business from the outset. As the conversations with business elites suggested, not all see the importance of improving educational quality. This partnership must help potential business partners to recognize that quality improvement in education is the mission of the project and in their long-term interest. EDUCA is likely to play a prominent role in the consciousness raising phase; although it has to some extent squandered the reputation it had built earlier among the business community, for it to be absent from this part of the project could cause negative feelings towards the project from some individuals and organizations whose support is valuable.

USAID could work with the American Chamber of Commerce to sponsor the visits of representatives of very successful school-business partnerships in other countries to the Dominican Republic. Also, sponsoring study trips for key board members and ministry personnel to see programs that work would be extremely useful. It is essential that any study trips be carefully planned. Participants need to be carefully screened for their willingness to engage the rest of the business community upon their return. It would be useful to hire a professional facilitator in the U.S. to accompany the group to debrief them after each day's activities. Someone needs to track the information gathered and deposit it upon return to the DR, for example on the foundation's web site. There should be roles and responsibilities for each participant on the trip, commitment and agreement established beforehand about what they will do upon their return and what the timeline is. Without a clearly defined follow-up strategy, the investment in this type of trip will not be maximized.

Provide participating businesses with information on outcomes in the sponsored schools. One of the findings from the interviews is that there is not overwhelming support for having the private sector pay for teacher training and monitoring and evaluation of improvement processes. However, if the sponsorship program is focusing on improved quality as its goal, then businesses need to know that their investments are making a difference. The foundation should work (most likely with education experts) to develop baseline measures, benchmarks and outcome measures. Within a realistic framework about what can be achieved in the short run, the foundation could provide report cards on the schools that show sponsors what is being achieved with their support.

This has a number of advantages. First, some competition could develop among the schools, with sponsors working to ensure that their schools meet reasonable targets. Second, it could provide some accountability in the schools, knowing that there are targets they are expected

to achieve. Third, it provides the basis for later cost-benefit analysis on the efficacy of specific types of investments. This is important for showing the public sector what level of investment is needed for the system as a whole to improve achievement as well as showing the sponsorship what investments are likely to achieve the best results.

Provide business sponsors opportunities for benefits in the short run. While it is assumed that the business community can be convinced of the need for long-term investment in education, it would be unwise to assume that they would be willing to forgo short-term benefits from participating in a school sponsorship program. All of the firms interviewed saw important benefits in terms of their public images or community and labor relations. The foundation should consider sponsoring high profile events (such as gala dinners for sponsors) that reward sponsorship by attracting publicity and giving sponsors the opportunity to interact with others in the business and political communities. In addition, the foundation could, as part of the package offered to business sponsors, work with the public relations offices in their firms to enhance the value to the firms of their school sponsorships.

Use the board as a recruitment strategy for schools. One way to recruit schools is to have the key constituent members of the foundation bring schools into the process. This could form part of the first-year goals of the organization and would provide the 5 to 7 schools that the project envisions in the initial year. For example, EDUCA, CONEP and AMCHAM might focus on bringing in one or two schools each from among their members. These business associations would want success and their members know the communities in which the schools operate and have a network of relationships in them. They know the key actors in each of those communities. The businesses know the school directors and the district supervisors. They need to be trained that quality improvement in the schools does not only mean a clean building where the roof does not leak. It means better teaching and learning.

Offer an integrated package to business sponsors. An integrated approach would offer firms the opportunity to invest in a local development project that has both long and short-term benefits. By investing in the package, firms could expect the following:

Avoid poor use of money by channeling it through a transparent, non-political organization backed by USAID.
Identify schools for the program.
Readies local schools for participation in a true partnership.
Analyze and implement a needs assessment and provide results to the business.
Works with firms to customize their donations by helping to develop a plan with the company to address and prioritize needs of the school.
Provides accountable behavior on part of schools.
Foundation will hire and monitor contractors for quality, and supervise in-kind contributions from school and community.
Foundation will contract for academic quality enhancement (teacher training, planning workshops, etc.).
Offers report cards that track achievements (construction, academic, etc.).
Provides opportunities for good publicity and contacts.

Work with Ministry of Education to channel information about achieving improvements into public system. In addition to working intensively with the private sector benefactors, the school sponsorship project must work closely with the Ministry. The gains that the Ministry currently hopes to achieve from a program are unworkable as they stand. The project needs to strike a delicate balance of allowing the Ministry to take some credit for the program while avoiding both the political association of the project with any specific political party or figure and any management interference by the Ministry. Either of the latter two would doom the project by shutting off business support. Instead, based on the assumption that partnerships must offer benefits to all the participants, the project must present other tangible advantages to the Ministry. There are several. First, by showing real improvement in some public schools through the sponsorship program, the Ministry can take credit for instituting a program that has positive results.

The second is that the school sponsorship program can produce positive lessons that the Ministry can incorporate into its own practices. This includes not only the area of academic achievement but also the mandates of the Secretaría and other innovations embodied in the *Plan Decenal*. The interviews revealed that many of the current school sponsorship programs have instituted programs that are required but that virtually no regular public schools offer. The Ministry could benefit from seeing how these mandates can actually be implemented. However, this implies that there is a mechanism within the Ministry to take up and incorporate such feedback into its own activities. USAID might consider working with the Ministry (and perhaps with the European Union's ongoing efforts at institutional reform) to help it create these channels. Having staff members of the Foundation who are Ministry employees would be useful points of contact, but the prior work of ensuring that information on quality improvement and program implementation can be incorporated into the Ministry's decision making is vital.

A third benefit that the Ministry could receive is teacher training. Because the scope of the sponsorship program is small, and it is likely that there will be geographic dispersion of participating schools, some of the programs run for teacher training are likely to have significant excess capacity. In those cases, teachers from nearby local public schools could be invited to participate. For example, a workshop on the effective teaching of reading would be of general interest to primary school teachers and by inviting other local teachers, the benefits could be channeled back into the education system.

Develop relationships with NGOs for the provision of training and evaluation services. A number of NGOs and institutes in the Dominican Republic have developed and offered training courses for teachers in areas such as teaching academic subject matter, student leadership, conflict resolution, etc. These NGOs should be contracted by the foundation to provide the specialized training that can lead to academic improvement. In addition, they could also be involved with the monitoring, evaluation and testing of academic achievement in the sponsored schools, although in this case, they would likely partner with external groups that have more expertise in these areas. At the same time, such pairings would help to improve the capacity of Dominican NGOs to carry out this kind of work.

V. COSTS

There are several categories of costs that the school sponsorship initiative is likely to entail. These are outlined here.

Costs of starting and maintaining the foundation. The costs of starting the foundation will include the salary of the Executive Director, office space rental and equipment, web site development, salaries for a fundraiser (first and second year), support staff and supplements for Ministry personnel. Although the small scale of the start-up would not allow these costs to be covered fully by overhead from the corporate donations, the long-run (3 to 5 years) goal should be to finance these costs from an endowment and from a low overhead. Because financial transparency is one of the primary requirements for attracting private sector support, a yearly, independent audit is an expense that should be considered.

Consciousness-raising. Initially, USAID should budget for consciousness-raising activities for the private sector. These would include bringing representatives from U.S. firms to the Dominican Republic to talk about their experiences with school sponsorships as well as a trip to the U.S. to see some programs in action. It is likely that the American Chamber of Commerce would be favorably disposed to making a contribution to defer some of these costs.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Teacher Training. In order to show qualitative and quantitative results in terms of quality improvement, the program needs to measure the progress of sponsored schools. This means developing and collecting baseline measures, ideally not only in sponsored schools, but in control schools as well. In addition, teacher training is necessary in areas that address teachers' personal and subject matter needs. As we have reported, many in the private sector do not see the need to fund these types of activities. Initially, these should be funded with a close eye on costs so as to be able to show what investments work best in terms of cost and to make a future argument for the importance of funding them. That is, if the private sector can be presented with positive results and some sense of their costs, then they may be more persuaded that their donated funds should be used for training activities.

Workshops with the Ministry. There are multiple points of entry into the project that are possible for the Ministry and they should be taken on as a full partner. As has been suggested here, some work will need to be done to redefine their role from the one they currently envision but nonetheless, they should not be seen as a 'junior' partner in the project. It would be very useful to involve them not only at the top level of policy making, but also at the levels where decisions are implemented. Accordingly, having workshops with those in the Ministry responsible for programs such as developing student councils (which the Falconbridge schools have done well) or other successful innovations in the sponsored schools would be useful. In addition, so that the Ministry understands and accepts the measures used to assess achievement in the sponsored schools, it would be useful to have staff from the Curriculum and Evaluation departments participate in the planning workshops

for that phase of the project. Not only could this help build capacity within the Ministry but it reduces the possibility that the Ministry later distance itself from the program by objecting to or rejecting the results as biased or based on irrelevant measures of achievement.

APPENDIX A- INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS INTERVIEWED

Elena Brineman, Director, United States Agency for International Development

Emanuel Castillo, Asociación para el Desarrollo, Inc. Development Association (APEDI)

Frank Castillo, CONEP

Centro Poveda

Julio Corral, Community Development Program, PUCMM/CEUR

Ramón Flores, Inversiones PLEAMAR

Lissette Gil, Hoteleros, La Romana-Bayahibe

Grupo de Competitividad de La Vega

Jorge Guzman, Timberland Co.

Donny Harrington, United States Agency for International Development

Aida Consuelo Hernáandez, EDUCA

José Miguel Hernandez, PUCMM/CEUR

Mario Mendez, Gerente Relaciones Publicas, Empresas Leon Jimenez

William Malamud, Cámara Americana de Comercio, American Chamber of Commerce

Kevin P. Manning, ITABO

Celso Marranzini, Multiquímica, S.A.

Radhamés Mejía, Vicerrector Ejecutivo, PUCMM

Mr. Horacio Ornez, FUDECO

Mrs. Milagros Ortíz Bosch, SEE

Antonio Rodríguez Mansfield, APEDEVE, Stratregic Center, Chemonics

Arelis Rodríguez, Fundación Falconbridge

Louis Rodríguez, Education Technology Advisor, SEE

Deisy de Salcedo, CODETEL

Mr. Luis Sánchez Noble, Asociación Industriales de Herrera/Empresas Unidas

Juan Tomás Tavares, Maritima Dominicana

Frida Villamil, Asociación Leonardo Da Vinci

Neici Zeller, United States Agency for International Development

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